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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 000136

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PL](#)
SUBJECT: KACZYNSKI'S NEW CLOTHES: LAW AND JUSTICE'S
(WANTING) ELECTORAL STRATEGY

REF: WARSAW 82

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR DANIEL SAINZ FOR REASONS
1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. The opposition Law and Justice Party (PiS) stands to benefit from growing Polish economic anxieties, and party chair Jaroslaw Kaczynski has criticized the government's unwillingness to undertake deficit spending to provide an economic stimulus. Otherwise, PiS's "new" anti-crisis proposals featured at the January 31-February 1 party congress are mainly a repackaging of old ideas. PiS insiders say Kaczynski's February 1 apology to the Polish intelligentsia and the planned re-establishment of his academic credentials mark the beginning of the party's push to re-take the Sejm in 2011 by courting urban intellectuals and young voters. PiS strategists believe the key to victory in 2011 is to win in Poland's six largest cities. Kaczynski's new, softer image notwithstanding, PiS has not articulated a substantive strategy to boost the party's appeal among its new target demographic. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Sporting a fresh haircut, tailored suit, and professorial eyeglasses at Law and Justice's (PiS) January 31 - February 1 party congress in Nowa Huta, party chair (and former PM) Jaroslaw Kaczynski announced plans to "make peace, not war" in his bid to retake the Sejm in 2011. Kaczynski apologized to the Polish intelligentsia for offensive statements and asked Poles to forget PiS's 2005-2007 coalition with extremist parties. Attempting to present a "complete" party to Polish voters, Kaczynski proposed increasing deficit spending, delaying Poland's accession to the Eurozone, and suspending privatization of large state-owned enterprises as means to combat the economic crisis. He also proposed increased government assistance to small businesses, which, he argued has been neglected by PM Tusk's government. Kaczynski also called for constitutional amendments to downsize both houses of parliament and to delineate more clearly competencies of the president and prime minister. Kaczynski's timing was fortuitous. On January 30, Tusk announced austerity government spending measures in response to unanticipated tax revenue shortfalls.

PIS - RETURNING TO ITS ROOTS, OR REINVENTING ITSELF?

¶3. (C) According to MP Mariusz Kaminski, PiS's spokesman in the Sejm, Kaczynski wants to present Poland as a modern, European, center-right party. He explained that PiS's long-term goal is to "take back the center," by winning over Polish intellectuals and youth -- i.e., PiS's original voter base in 2001, the year the Kaczynskis founded the party. PiS will focus its efforts on urban voters, PiS MP Adam Hoffman told us, repeating the familiar argument that PiS and Civic Platform (PO) essentially tied in all areas of Poland in 2007, except the country's six largest cities -- Warsaw, Krakow, Gdansk, Poznan, Wroclaw, and Lodz. He insisted that Kaczynski's apology to the intelligentsia and his call for voters to forget PiS's 2005-2007 coalition with extremist

parties were the first steps in an effort to "ease urban voters' concerns."

¶4. (C) Kaczynski's new image strategy will be accompanied by a "return to the universities" -- an attempt to re-establish Kaczynski's academic credentials (NB: Kaczynski has a Ph.D. in law and was a lecturer and librarian at Warsaw University in the late 1970s and early 1980s). Kaminski predicted PiS will get a short-term bounce in public support, but conceded it will be difficult for Kaczynski to maintain a conciliatory tone while criticizing the government's policies, especially given PM Tusk's call for "solidarity" in the midst of an economic crisis. Kaminski was even more pessimistic that Kaczynski would be able to appeal to PiS's second target audience -- Polish youth. "This will be a long-term process," he sighed. PiS intends to launch an Internet-based campaign strategy, based in part on President Obama's 2008 campaign strategy.

NEW PACKAGE, SAME PRODUCT

¶5. (C) Aside from Kaczynski's new image and the party's re-tooled media strategy, Kaminski and other PiS insiders have been unable to articulate what was new in the party's platform, or how specifically PiS would gain urban intellectuals' support. Kaczynski's effort to promote a softer image by highlighting female members at the party congress and in TV spots have since drawn criticism for using the three former ministers as "decoration." Media commentary has also noted that the economic platform presented at the party congress is little more than a repackaging of PiS's earlier economic proposals. It is not clear that Kaczynski

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is truly prepared to jeopardize his current voter base -- elderly, rural, and "traditional values" voters, many of whom feel have fared poorly during Poland's post-communist transition and accession to the European Union. With this base, PiS managed to maintain public support at 20 to 25 percent.

FOREIGN POLICY OFFENSIVE

¶6. (C) Although he has nominally withdrawn from the PiS, President Lech Kaczynski and his apparatus are clearly taking on the opposition role of attacking Tusk government foreign and defense policies. According to the President's Deputy National Security Advisor, Witold Waszczykowski, National Security Advisor Aleksander Szczyglo was recently appointed in order to intensify criticism of the Tusk Government in these areas. Waszczykowski said Szczyglo plans to publicly criticize Tusk and FM Sikorski's "retrenchment program" -- e.g., closing down smaller Polish embassies, withdrawing from foreign operations, and ending Poland's bid for a UNSC seat -- and the resulting decrease in Polish international influence. Szczyglo also plans to take Tusk to task for his engagement of Russia and Germany, which has "achieved nothing."

COMMENT

¶7. (C) Aside from its new image and ambitious, but undefined, plans for an Internet campaign, PiS does not seem to have a substantive strategy to win the support of young, educated, urban voters. For the most part, PiS's message and its leaders' populist worldview largely remain the same. That said, potential fallout from the global economic crisis may eventually prompt urban voters to shift their support from PO to PiS.

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